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A Study of Business/Industry and Training Needs in Northeast Nebraska

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A Study of Business/Industry and
Training Needs in Northeast
Nebraska

Prepared for the
Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District

by
R. K. Piper

May 1986



The Center for Applied Urban Research
College of Public Affairs and Community Service
University of Nebraska at Omaha



A Study of Business/Industry and Training Needs
In Northeastern Nebraska

Introduction

In February 1986, the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NNEDD) contracted with the Center for Applied Urban Research (CAUR) of the University of Nebraska at Omaha to conduct a business survey related to training needs and business conditions in the region. The Northeast Technical Community College and NNEDD designed the survey instrument to collect information which would be useful in economic development program planning and determining training needs and areas of interest. A total of 896 questionnaires were mailed to businesses in the region during February by CAUR and 208 responses were received; a response rate of 23.2 percent.

The NNEDD area was divided into three districts; the northern area had a return of 90/366 (24.6 percent), the eastern area returned 72/348 (20.6 percent), and the southern area returned 46/182 (25.3 percent). Responses were received from 66/124 communities (53.2%) with the largest number of responses coming from Norfolk (11.5%), Columbus (9.6%), and Fremont (5.8%).

Results

QUESTION 1. PLEASE CLASSIFY YOUR BUSINESS AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE:

Over 40 percent of the businesses classified themselves as retail, about 23 percent were manufacturing firms and about 14 percent were service oriented.

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Manufacturing | 46 | 22.8% |
| Retail | 83 | 41.1% |
| Wholesale | 3 | 1.5% |
| Service | 28 | 13.5% |
| Transportation | 3 | 1.5% |
| Communication | 5 | 2.5% |
| Construction | 3 | 1.5% |
| Public Administration | 1 | .5% |
| Finance | 1 | .5% |
| Insurance | 4 | 2.0% |
| Real Estate | 1 | .5% |
| Other | 24 | 12.0% |
| Total | 202 | 99.9%* |

*Does not equal 100.0% due to rounding

QUESTION 2. [AVERAGE ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT]

The results show that the average number of employees per business declined from 19.6 in 1984 to 18.8 in 1985 and the projections for 1986 were for 16.7 employees per business.

| | <u>Number of Businesses</u> | <u>Average Number of Employees</u> | <u>Total Employees</u> |
|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1984 Average Annual Employment | 167 | 19.6 | 3,267 |
| 1985 Average Annual Employment | 178 | 18.8 | 3,339 |
| 1986 Projected Average Annual Employment | 203 | 16.7 | 3,400 |

Annual average employment was also compiled for businesses by region as shown below.

Northern Region

| | <u>Number of Businesses</u> | <u>Average Number of Employees</u> | <u>Total Employees</u> |
|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1984 Average Annual Employment | 66 | 23.6 | 1,558 |
| 1985 Average Annual Employment | 72 | 23.1 | 1,662 |
| 1986 Projected Average Annual Employment | 86 | 19.3 | 1,657 |

Southern Region

| | <u>Number of Businesses</u> | <u>Average Number of Employees</u> | <u>Total Employees</u> |
|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1984 Average Annual Employment | 36 | 28.8 | 1,036 |
| 1985 Average Annual Employment | 37 | 27.3 | 1,010 |
| 1986 Projected Average Annual Employment | 46 | 22.8 | 1,048 |

Eastern Region

| | <u>Number of Businesses</u> | <u>Average Number of Employees</u> | <u>Total Employees</u> |
|---|---------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 1984 Average Annual Employment | 65 | 10.4 | 673 |
| 1985 Average Annual Employment | 69 | 9.7 | 667 |
| 1986 Projected Average Annual Employment | 71 | 9.8 | 695 |

QUESTION 3. HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES?

The following table shows that 121 businesses had managerial/professional personnel, 111 had sales personnel, and 110 had clerical personnel. The table also shows that 70 firms had 1,275 general (unskilled) employees.

| | <u>Employment Classification</u> | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| | <u>Number of Businesses</u> | <u>Total Employees</u> | <u>Average Number of Employees</u> |
| Sales | 111 | 341 | 3.1 |
| Managerial/Professional | 121 | 350 | 2.9 |
| Technical Supervisors | 50 | 142 | 2.8 |
| Clerical | 110 | 426 | 3.9 |
| Craftsmen (skilled) | 84 | 591 | 7.0 |
| General (unskilled) | 70 | 1,275 | 18.2 |
| Other | 29 | 192 | 6.6 |

Most firms had between one and five employees in all employment categories.

| <u>Employee Distribution Among Business by Category</u> | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|----------|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| <u>Number of Employees</u> | <u>Sales</u> | | <u>Managerial/ Professional</u> | | <u>Technical Supervisors</u> | | <u>Clerical</u> | | <u>Craftsman</u> | |
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| 1-5 | 98 | 88.3 | 114 | 94.2 | 43 | 86.0 | 100 | 90.9 | 64 | 76.2 |
| 6-10 | 9 | 8.1 | 4 | 3.3 | 5 | 10.0 | 5 | 4.5 | 12 | 14.3 |
| 11-20 | 4 | 3.6 | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 2.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 2.4 |
| 21-50 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 2.0 | 4 | 3.6 | 4 | 4.8 |
| 50 + | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.9 | 2 | 2.4 |
| Total | 111 | 100.0% | 121 | 99.9%* | 50 | 100.0% | 110 | 99.9%* | 84 | 100.1%* |

| <u>Number of Employees</u> | <u>General Unskilled</u> | | <u>Other</u> | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| 1-5 | 45 | 64.3 | 25 | 86.2 |
| 6-10 | 12 | 17.1 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 11-20 | 5 | 7.1 | 0 | 0.0 |
| 21-50 | 3 | 4.3 | 4 | 13.8 |
| 50 + | 5 | 7.1** | 0 | 0.0 |
| Total | 70 | 99.9% | 29 | 100.0% |

*Does not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

**Includes firms with 350 and 390 employees.

QUESTION 4. ARE ANY OF YOUR EMPLOYEES UNIONIZED?

Only one firm reported that its employees were unionized. This firm reported that 40 percent were unionized.

QUESTION 5. HOW DO YOUR SALES THIS YEAR COMPARE WITH BUSINESS IN PREVIOUS YEARS?

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Considerably better | 10 | 5.1 |
| A little better | 36 | 18.2 |
| About the same | 60 | 30.3 |
| A little worse | 66 | 33.3 |
| Much worse | 26 | 13.1 |
| Total | 198 | 100.0 |

QUESTION 6. DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE PLANS FOR:

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Business expansion/contraction | 23 | 11.3 |
| Additional employees | 9 | 4.4 |
| Layoff/reduction | 12 | 5.9 |
| Relocation | 4 | 2.0 |
| Product/service diversification | 16 | 7.9 |
| Closing | 9 | 4.4 |
| No change | 114 | 56.2 |
| Other | 16 | 7.9 |
| Total | 203 | 100.0% |

Over half of the businesses (56.2%) currently had no plans for change while about 11 percent had plans for expansion or contraction. About 6 percent planned layoffs or reductions in the workforce and 4 percent planned reductions. Eight percent (8%) had plans for product or service diversification, 4 percent were closing and 2 percent had plans for relocation.

QUESTION 7. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD BEST DESCRIBE YOUR EXISTING MARKETS?

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Local (20 mile radius) | 84 | 41.8 |
| Areawide (75 mile radius) | 63 | 31.3 |
| Regional (extending to major trade centers at Sioux City, Omaha, and Lincoln) | 16 | 8.0 |
| Statewide | 14 | 7.0 |
| National | 17 | 8.5 |
| Multi-national | 7 | 3.5 |
| Total | 201 | 100.1%* |

*Does not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

QUESTION 8. WHAT ARE YOUR MAJOR PRODUCTS OR SERVICES?

One hundred eighty-nine (189) businesses reported 62 different major products or services that they provided. The following are those listed most frequently from among 318 responses:

| | <u>Number</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Livestock, feed | 25 |
| 2. Insurance sales | 22 |
| 3. Retail store | 20 |
| 4. Agricultural products | 18 |
| 5. Machinery welding | 17 |
| 6. Professional service | 15 |
| 7. Newspaper | 11 |
| 7. Lawn equipment | 11 |
| 8. Commercial printing | 10 |
| 8. Groceries | 10 |
| 9. Autos | 9 |
| 10. Petroleum products | 7 |
| 11. Beer | 7 |
| 12. Floral, nursery, landscape | 7 |
| 13. Fertilizers | 7 |
| 14. Other | <u>122</u> |
| Total | 318 |

QUESTION 9. WHAT PRODUCTS DO YOU CURRENTLY PURCHASE OUT OF STATE THAT MIGHT BE PROVIDED BY A NEBRASKA BUSINESS IF QUALITY SPECIFICATIONS AND PRICE WERE COMPETITIVE WITH YOUR CURRENT SUPPLIER?

Ninety-three (93) businesses listed 32 products which are currently purchased out of state which might be provided by a Nebraska business. Eleven (11) businesses stated that they purchased everything out of state. Those listed most frequently were:

| | <u>Number</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Grain augers | 12 |
| 2. Office equipment | 7 |
| 3. Tires, wheels, steel | 6 |
| 4. Printing | 6 |
| 5. Bolts, nuts, washers | 5 |
| 6. Stereos | 5 |
| 7. All Groceries | 4 |
| 8. Hydraulics, steel, hose | 4 |
| 9. Nursery products | 3 |
| 10. Other | <u>41</u> |
| Total | 93 |

QUESTION 10. ARE THERE TYPES OF JOB TRAINING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR BUSINESS TO UPGRADE LABOR FORCE SKILLS OR DEVELOP MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES?

Types of job training businesses would like to see implemented to upgrade labor force or management skills included:

| <u>Technical Knowledge</u> | <u>Number</u> |
|---|---------------|
| Micro-computers | 31 |
| Marketing skills | 3 |
| Installation seminars (computers) | 2 |
| Business office use (computers) | 2 |
| In-house training (computers) | 2 |
| Bookkeeping, wordprocessing (computers) | 2 |
| Other | <u>7</u> |
| Total | 49 |

| <u>Job Skill Upgrading</u> | <u>Number</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Sales | 3 |
| Specific training | 3 |
| Other | <u>7</u> |
| Total | 13 |

| <u>Personal Professional Growth</u> | <u>Number</u> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Time management | 16 |
| Workshops | 3 |
| Other | <u>7</u> |
| Total | 26 |

QUESTION 11. WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PURSUING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ABOVE IF LOW COST OR NO COST TRAINING PROGRAMS WERE AVAILABLE?

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-------|---------------|----------------|
| Yes | 103 | 62.4 |
| No | <u>62</u> | <u>37.6</u> |
| Total | 165 | 100.0% |

QUESTION 12. WOULD ANY OF THE FOLLOWING HELP IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS OPERATION?

Those items listed most frequently which businessmen thought would help improve their business operations included:

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| Advertising and sales promotion | 58 | 16.7 |
| Downtown improvement | 41 | 11.8 |
| Marketing strategies | 32 | 9.2 |
| Better community image | 28 | 8.1 |
| Management seminars | 26 | 7.5 |
| More highly-qualified labor | 24 | 6.9 |
| Community Business Improvement Program | 24 | 6.9 |
| Personal growth areas | 23 | 6.6 |
| Information on financing programs | 20 | 5.8 |
| Import/export markets | 17 | 4.9 |
| Recordkeeping and accounting | 16 | 4.6 |
| Labor/management relations | 15 | 4.3 |
| Statistical Analysis Research | 10 | 2.9 |
| Farming being profitable | 5 | 1.4 |
| More money in area | 4 | 1.2 |
| Other | 4 | 1.2 |
| Total | 347* | 100.0% |

*Some businesses listed more than one response.

QUESTION 13. WHAT BUSINESS/INDUSTRIES DO YOU FEEL SHOULD BE ATTRACTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY THAT WOULD COMPLIMENT THE GROWTH POTENTIAL OF YOUR BUSINESS IN NORTHEAST NEBRASKA?

Businesses or industries that should be attracted to the community which would compliment growth potential:

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. All types, anything | 37 | 21.5 |
| 2. Manufacturing | 33 | 19.2 |
| 3. Agracultural related | 30 | 17.4 |
| 4. Industrial | 15 | 8.7 |
| 5. Food processing | 14 | 8.1 |
| 6. Retail | 9 | 5.2 |
| 7. Non-agracultural related | 9 | 5.2 |
| 8. Construction | 7 | 4.1 |
| 9. Electronics/high technology | 6 | 3.5 |
| 10. Other | 12 | 7.0 |
| Total | 172 | 99.9%* |

*Does not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

QUESTION 14. WHAT POSITIVE FACTORS DO YOU SEE IN YOUR COMMUNITY/NORTHEAST NEBRASKA THAT STIMULATE ECONOMIC GROWTH?

Positive factors in your community that stimulate growth:

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Quality and low-cost labor | 57 | 28.5 |
| 2. Very few, none | 31 | 15.5 |
| 3. Good business and industry mix | 15 | 7.5 |
| 4. Access to transportation | 12 | 6.0 |
| 5. Qctive Chamber of Commerce | 12 | 6.0 |
| 6. Quality living environment | 11 | 5.5 |
| 7. Water, sewer, utilities | 10 | 5.0 |
| 8. Stores, local economy | 8 | 4.0 |
| 9. Positive attitudes/ community pride | 8 | 4.0 |
| 10. Other | <u>36</u> | <u>18.0</u> |
| Total | 200 | 100.0% |

QUESTION 15. WHAT NEGATIVE FACTORS DO YOU SEE IN YOUR COMMUNITY/NORTHEAST NEBRASKA THAT HINDER ECONOMIC GROWTH?

Negative factors that hinder growth in the community:

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| Lack of money for agricultural problems | 69 | 35.9 |
| Poor attitudes | 15 | 7.8 |
| Business closings | 15 | 7.8 |
| High taxes | 13 | 6.8 |
| Lack of incentives | 11 | 5.7 |
| No jobs to hold people | 10 | 5.2 |
| Other | <u>59</u> | <u>30.7</u> |
| Total | 192 | 99.9%* |

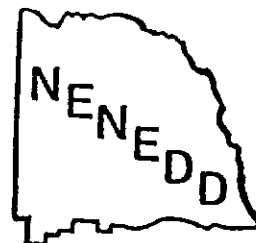
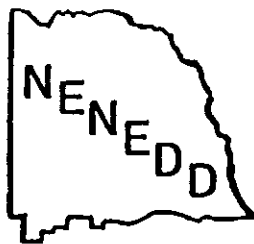
*Does not equal 100.0% due to rounding.

QUESTION 16. SHOULD MULTI-COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH BE EXPLORED IN NORTHEAST NEBRASKA (I.E., SHARED DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS)?

| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-------|---------------|----------------|
| Yes | 143 | 88.8 |
| No | <u>18</u> | <u>11.2</u> |
| Total | 161 | 100.0% |

QUESTION 17. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: PLEASE INDICATE ANY IDEAS, CONCERNS, OR PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS WHICH YOU FEEL ARE RELEVANT TO THE ISSUE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH OR WHICH YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPLEMENTED.

Sixty-eight businesses supplied additional comments for review by NNDEDD.



BUSINESS/INDUSTRY STUDY
OF NORTHEAST NEBRASKA

1. Please classify your business as closely as possible:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retail | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Administration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list |
- _____

2. ☐ 1984 Annual Average Employment
☐ 1985 Annual Average Employment
☐ 1986 Projected Annual Average Employment

3. How many employees do you currently have in each of the following categories?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales | <input type="checkbox"/> Craftsmen, skilled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Managerial, professional | <input type="checkbox"/> General, unskilled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Supervisors | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please list |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clerical | _____ |

4. Are any of your employees unionized? If so, what percentage?

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> % |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | |

5. How do you your sales this year compare with business in previous years?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Considerably Better | <input type="checkbox"/> A Little Worse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A Little Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Much Worse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> About the Same | |

6. Do you currently have plans for:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Expansion/Contraction | <input type="checkbox"/> Product/Service Diversification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Employees | <input type="checkbox"/> Closing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Layoff/Reduction | <input type="checkbox"/> No Change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relocation | |

7. Which of the following would best describe your existing markets?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local (20-mile radius) | <input type="checkbox"/> Statewide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Areawide (75-mile radius) | <input type="checkbox"/> National |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional (Extending to major trade centers at Sioux City, Omaha, Lincoln) | <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-national |

8. What are your major products or services?

9. What products do you currently purchase out of state that might be provided by a Nebraska business if quality specifications and price were competitive with your current supplier?

10. Are there types of job training you would like to see implemented in your business to upgrade labor force skills or develop management skills for your employees? If so, please list:

| Technological Knowledge (Ex., Micro Computers, applications for managers) | Job Skill Upgrading (Ex., Cross training, diversification programs) | Personal/Professional Growth (Ex. Time management, posi- tive reinforcement to increase performance) |
|--|--|---|
| | | |

11. Would you be interested in pursuing training opportunities as listed in #10 above if low cost or no cost training programs were available to your business?

_____ Yes

_____ No

12. Would any of the following help improve your business operation?

_____ More Highly-Qualified Labor
 _____ Labor/Management Relations
 _____ Downtown Improvement
 _____ Advertising and Sales Promotion
 _____ Recordkeeping and Accounting
 _____ Management Seminars
 _____ Import/Export Markets
 _____ Marketing Strategies

_____ Statistical Analysis/Research
 _____ Personal Growth Areas
 _____ Better Community Image
 _____ Information on Financing Programs
 _____ Organized Community Business
 _____ Improvement program
 _____ Other (please list)

13. What business/industries do you feel should be attracted to your community that would compliment the growth potential of your business in Northeast Nebraska?

14. What positive factors do you see in your community/Northeast Nebraska that stimulate economic growth?

15. What negative factors do you see in your community/Northeast Nebraska that hinder economic growth?

16. Should multi-community opportunities for economic growth be explored in Northeast Nebraska (i.e., shared development corporations)?

_____ Yes

_____ No

17. Additional comments: Please indicate any ideas, concerns, or program suggestions which you feel are relevant to the issue of economic growth or which you would like to see implemented.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Contact Person _____

Please return by February 17, 1986.